THE SPEECH OF A NOBLE PEER

Upon the Reading of the

BILL

FOR PREVENTING

Occasional Conformity.

My Lords,

I Am very little personally concern'd in this Bill: I have no Office, I expect none, nor do I desire any; and yet I pay as much Duty to her Majesty, and wish as well to her Government, *as those that have half a dozen.*

I shall not, *my Lords*, enter into the Consideration of the Justice or Injustice of this Bill, whether a Man may be deprived of what he has a legal Right to, without any forfeiture on this part;

the

tho' in my Opinion he may; because private Right is always to give place to publick Safety; and nothing else can justify one of the best Bills that ever was made for the Security of the Protestant Religion, I mean the *Test Act*: But this is not the Case here; the Persons affected by this Bill are such as have always been serviceable to the Government, and are some of the best Friends to it.

Nor shall I trouble your Lordships to shew, that the great Enemies of the State do not so much consider you as you are three different Nations, but as you are imbodied People under one Sovereign. Neither does the Church of *Rome* so much oppose you, as consider'd under the Notion of Church of *England*, Occasional Conformist or Dissenter; but as you are part of the Northern Heresy, as you deny the Supremacy, Infallibility and Idolatry of their Church: They have no more Affection for any one of those Persuasions than for another, but equally design the Ruin of us all.

But, *my Lords*, that which I shall strictly speak to, is the Point of Time in which this Bill visits you; and, in my Opinion, it could never have come in a more unseasonable and more dangerous Juncture: I hope your Lordships will not think I wander from the Subject of the Debate, if I shew a little the present Posture of our Affairs, as so many Arguments that at least will, I hope, justify me for giving my Vote against a second reading of this Bill.

First, *My Lords*, if we consider what a potent, what a vigilant Adversary we have to struggle with, of the French King, a Prince *whose Designs are laid upon the greatest Maturity of Deliberation, carried on with the greatest Secrecy*, and executed with the *greatest Dispatch*: *There is no unsteadiness in his Counsels, his Troops are never surpriz'd, his Designs are never betray'd, his Attempts never disappointed by either the Emulation, Envy, or private Piques of his Great Generals*: He can bring his Army sooner into the Field, and keep them longer there than we can; nay, can do more with a small part, after we are gone into Winter Quarters, than we can with the main Body of ours in a whole Campaign, and that too *when they are commanded by a General that has Retrieved the Glory of the* English *Nation*. Sure, *my Lords*, all Heads, all Hearts, all Hands, are little enough against such an Enemy.

In the next place, *my Lords*, what heavy Taxes lie upon us here at home, without any hope of ease, and very little Expe-

ctation

ſtation of Advantage? The reaſon why Men chearfully undergo ſuch Burthens, is becauſe they expect ſome publick Advantage by them, or at leaſt that they may enjoy the Remainder with ſecurity: But when they have no Proſpect from what is given, and not ſecure of enjoying what is left, it will come very hard. We have, *my Lords*, given great Summs the laſt Year for the Army; but what great Matter have we done? For my own part, I think no Man can reaſonably expect more from what we are now raiſing this Year, *than to meet again here next Winter, and give more, and ſo on.*

And as to our *Navy*, what a vaſt and fruitleſs Expence have we been at? I confeſs to your Lordſhips, when I conſider theſe two Heads, it puts me in mind of old *Jacob*'s Propheſy of his Son *Iſſachar*, in the 49th Chapter of *Geneſis*, Iſſachar *is a ſtrong Aſs couching under two Burdens, he bowed his Shoulder to bear, and became a Servant to Tribute.* I believe this Propheſy has been fulfill'd elſewhere.

Was there ever ſuch an Expedition undertaken as that into the *Streights* laſt Summer? I could never yet meet with that Man who could give a reaſonable account of it: Sure, no Man will ſay, That it was to carry out your *Trade*; that was to put the Nation to a Million-Expence to carry out three or four hundred thouſand Pounds, and make a Kind of Neceſſity of as much more to bring it home: Nor, will any Man, I think, own that ſo great a Force was ſent thither to make the *Italian Princes* declare for the *Emperor*, and then leave them to the Mercy of the *French*. 'Tis very true, ſo vaſt a Fleet plainly ſhew'd *how formidable a power the Confederates were by Sea*; but ſure, it ſhew'd alſo *the weakneſs of our Conduct, that knew ſo little what to do with it.*

But there is one thing, *my Lords*, that above all amazes me: Every Body knows that the Foundation of all our Expectations and Deſigns of placing the Houſe of *Auſtria* on the Throne of *Spain*, is laid on the Aſſiſtance we expect from *Portugal*; we Know too by the manner of that Prince's Conduct and Treatment with us, that no Prince is Govern'd more by Intereſt. Why then was not a greater part of ſo vaſt a Fleet left there to *countenance* or *ſecure* him? Sure, 'tis unaccountable that he ſhould have any juſt cauſe to apprehend himſelf either *forgotten* or *neglected*. No Man knows what difficulties or delays may force him to.

46

A noble *Lord* with a *white Staff*, gave it as a reason, *why, tho' he was against the bringing in of this Bill, yet since it had passed another place, he was for it, because the not passing of it now, he feared would create a great disturbance in our Affairs*; which I take to be a great Reason against the Bill: For 'tis very well known the *Leading* Part of the Nation are most concern'd in it; and if this Bill should pass, the sad Effects of it would soon be found in the *Exchequer*.

Besides all this, *my Lords*, what great and irreparable Losses have we had? The Parliament may Vote Money, and Money may build Ships; *but 'tis impossible to recover our Seamen, nor is there any Encouragement to them, or Nursery for them.*

There is one thing more *my Lords*, which I will at present but name; because upon some other occasion I intend to speak more on that Point. It may perhaps seem too big to be named, but I shall never think any thing so, that may prove dangerous to the Crown or Government: *It is the extraordinary Favour of one or two Persons.* A thing that has been very fatal to the Royal Family; and what has been may be. I will only in short say, When all the Favour is bestow'd upon one or two Persons, when all the Power by Sea and Land is either virtually or openly in one Hand; when all the Offices, like a Set of Locks, are commanded by one *Master-Key*; I pray God it never again prove fatal both to Crown and Country.

Give me leave only to recapitulate and say, whether your Lordships consider the present Posture of our Affairs, either at Home or Abroad, by Sea or Land, in Court or Camp, I can never think this a proper time for such a Bill.

BRITISH MUSEUM 8.dd.70

London, Printed in the Year, 1704.